

SINGLE *and* HAPPY

Finding Your Love Life Every Day



GELO BALSITA

Single and Happy

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Single and Happy: Finding your love life every day

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By Angelo Bautista Balsita

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For:

Elizabeth, Roberto, Robelle, Gester, Cristina and Marimar

(No one could ask for a better family)

*Mae, Kim, Jovello, Diana, Francis, Jay-anne, Christel, Thea
and Rudy*

(For patiently reading and helping me with the edit)

Friends, thank you for your words of encouragement.
This is for you! 😊



Diana Isis Velasco

Gelo, you never cease to amaze me whenever you speak, post and share. Your words give life; they encourage and make us believe how wonderful and fulfilling it is to be in God's hand. May your words travel far and across cities, countries, and even continents so that many people will meet our awesome God and they will be inspired to speak and share the truth, life, and love of Jesus. 😊

1y Like Reply



Ramona Maria Morala

Hi Gelo, such an admirable attitude and dedication from a young man like you! Carry on...and know that even "extra miles" have limits. Take care of yourself and take care of your health, always.

1y Like Reply



Mark Anthony Ferrer

write a book! 📖👍

47w Like Reply



Francis Jerome G. Santos

Thank you bro for this beautiful reflection. Take care!

1y Like Reply



Katleeya Benems

Thanks Gelo. Amazing kau.. We live freely but with great responsibility! 😊 thanks for sharing and reminding us. To Live with a purpose everyday. 😊😊😊

14w Like Reply



Stephen Anthony Francis Drum

Great post Gelo!!! I am sure Jesus would have loved to have the opportunity to post something like this and reach so many people at the same time... and yet still be personal 😊 God bless 😊

1y Like Reply



Lj Japus

So impressed to this post kuya Gelo. No doubt why I idolized you so much.



10w Like Reply



Resel Anne Jang

Thanks for this, Gelo. You can write a book about your reflections na talaga. 😊 God bless!

2w Love Reply



Eunice Babalcon

What a moving reflection. Thanks Gelo, and thank you Jesus for the inspiration!

6w Like Reply



Naz Dnomyar

This is so inspirational my friend Gelo Balsita... God bless..

1y Like Reply



Lucia Patatag Rama

The word of God gives Wisdom, people are busy looking for Wisdom in the word of the world that makes them tired to find. Thank you bro may many youngs could find what you've found. God Bless you always!!!

10w Like Reply



Desiree Ann

Galing nito, Gelo! I have been so busy that now I realize I missed reading your reflections. 😊

1w Like Reply



Adriana B. Haro

I'm sure that Jesus is smiling at you, Gelo. He needs native apostles of the digital continent to continue his mission today. Keep falling in love with him, that's all you need.

22w Love Reply



Verónica Hernández

Yeeehh Gelo that's great!!!

1w Like Reply



 **Ma Elena Coliao**
an extraordinary preacher! 🙌🙏🙏
1w Love Reply

 **Don Jose Salita**
You are so bountiful blessed, Kuya Gelo! 🥰❤️🙏
1w Like Reply

 **Jek del Rosario**
Hi Gelo, you look good and peacefully spirited... Keep going!
9w Like Reply

 **Karla Galima**
Very well said Gelo! Straight right through the core! Hahaha! Mind if I share this to TGIF peeps? 😊
1y Like Reply

 **Eric Meister**
Bravo Brother Gelo 🙌
2w Like Reply

 **Restituta Oripaypay**
Thanks Gelo. Continue loving and be a blessing to everybody. God bless.
3w Like Reply

 **Luisa Derla Cuyos**
Salamat Kuya Gelo, iba ka talaga, kahanga hanga ang yong talento. God bless you.
2w Love Reply

 **Gelo Balsita**
Salamat din po ate Lui! 😊
1w Like Reply

 **Luisa Derla Cuyos**
Salamat din, dahil sini share ko din sa iba, at nakakainspire, nakakamulat din at sort of reminder natutuwa sila.
1w Like Reply

 **Maria Joymellie Brigola**
I'll be the first one to buy that book. Hahahaha hintayin mo yung akin. Charot. :))
1y Like Reply

 **Lynn Maceda**
Thank God for giving you the grace of this wisdom, Gelo.
At a young age, your reflections and attitude is Excellent and Yes, Absolutely Correct!

Congratulations for your able to write/ document it sooo well... and share it in social media for a lasting imprint as a gentle reminder: posts to ponder...

Young man, take it from a beautiful young woman@ 60....ha ha ha!

God bless everyone! 🙏🙏🙏
1y Like Reply

 **Ma Mae Gabales**
Thank you for drawing us close to Jesus, Gelo 🍀
6w Like Reply

 **Jane Dela Paz-Labitan**
Ganda naman ng message...
47w Like Reply

 **Alvin Dagaraga**
i was.... aaaahhh... it hurts when it penetrates inside your heart. 😊
11w Like Reply

 **Jess Baja**
Amen to that bro! Gogogo...
3w Like Reply

 **Chris Gonzaga**
Keep going Bro Gelo Balsita, you will touch, inspire and change many lives... Jesus will help you go through...
4w Love Reply

 **Regina Flor O. Peña**
Two thumbs up :-):-):-)thank you for sharing Jesus by the fruit of your encounter with Him !!!
10w Like Reply

 **Menchie Ferrer Quinal**
well said Bro Gelo! lets keep the fire! 🔥
6w Like Reply

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Introduction

I have three disclaimers to start.

First, don't read this book!

If you are looking for an academic answer, psychological fact, or philosophical argument about the meaning of life, then this book is *not* for you. The last thing you can do is to base your theology here, as much as you can, please don't. I'm not a scholar, I'm just an ordinary guy.

Second, read this book!

If you are looking for a friend who is open to share his feelings, questions, and reflections in life then this book is for you. Here, you will read a simple testimony of a little boy searching for happiness – me.

For years and years, I've been searching for it. I wonder why I am not happy. I looked at my friends in social media and they seemed to be happy, traveling to different places, achieving goals, and having partners. Why not me?

Do you also feel the same?

One time I talked to a friend, an engineer, with a high paying job, healthy body, an amazing social life, and a girlfriend. He seemed to be the picture of a happy man for me. I was wrong. I was shocked when he opened up to me that despite of all he had and he was, he still felt sad, lonely, and empty.

I was like, “Huh?!” If having the things that we *want* will not make us happy, satisfied, and complete, then what can?

That’s it! You got the right question! That’s what we’re going to explore. Together let us discover what is it that can lead us to a deep, lasting, and true happiness.

Third and last disclaimer, I am happy not because I am single, it just happened that I am both single and happy at the same time. To add to that, I am also poor and low-profile.

But still, how come I can say that I’m happy?

I am happy because I found a *love life* today. Yes, today!

This book is all about that. A collection of reflections in finding your *love life* every day.

My suggestion? Read one chapter of this per day and you will see, regardless of your status – single, in a relationship, married, complicated or confused, for sure you can find your *love life* too, one day at a time.

I pray that as you read this book, you may find a *life* to its fullness and a *love* that is eternal. The *love life* that you deserve and the *love life* that God wants for you.

With a smile,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AB Balageta'.

Gelo

Hey, someone loves you!

"Though the mountains fall away and the hills be shaken, My love shall never fall away from you."

Isaiah 54:10

1

MOVING ON

"God is love."

1 John 4:8

Have you ever experienced moving on from your past relationship? Or are you that someone who is still moving on even though there has never been an "us"?

Why do we move on anyway?

We move on because we were hurt, betrayed and left behind.

Nagmahal, nasaktan, nag emo. (I loved, I was hurt and I became emotional)

We move on because we were broken hearted. But before that, we loved.

All those who are hurting are loving, and all those who are loving are hurting.

Why do we love?

They say, we will only be happy the moment we find our *true love, soulmate, or partner-for-life*. That's why we search for them and love them.

Do you agree?

Me? Of course! That's why I looked for that love of my life, I looked for a girlfriend.

When I was in high school, I had my first crush. She's beautiful, smart and kind. In short, she had everything, including my heart. I wanted to tell her my feelings, but every time I see her, I was stunned and paralyzed to the point of suffocation. So, what I did instead was to write a letter saying, "I love you" (you see how fast things were when I was young?). Then one day I gathered up all my courage, handed the letter to her then *woooosh*, I ran away!

A day after that, I received a note from her in a pink envelope. I smelled it and its fragrance entered into my heart, excitement ran through my veins.

It was written, translated in English, "*Dear Gelo, thank you, you are a good man, but, it's better for us just to be friends.*" Ouuuuch! #friendzone.

If she only knew how painful it was to be broken hearted! *Charot!*

In moments like this, our friends will comfort us and give us pieces of advice such as,

"Kalimutan mo na yan, sige sige maglibang. Ang problema sa babae dapat hindi iniinda. Hayaan mo sila ang maghabol sa'yo diba?". (Just forget them and be happy. Don't waste your energy on girls. Just let them chase you, right?)

So, with my friends, I tried to go to many places, did many things, and played a lot of games. Sometimes I just chilled and relaxed, avoiding any stress in school. So obviously my grades *chillaxed* too!

I did a lot of things to the point that I got confused.

I already moved on with her. Every time I see that girl, I don't feel anything anymore, and I was *happy* with what I was doing. However, deep inside me, I knew I was still incomplete. My happiness was temporal and fleeting, it was short-lived that whatever I did, I felt empty, as if something was taken away from me that could not be restored. I could fool the world but I could not fool myself.

Be honest, even you, I know you have been in the same situation or you're in this situation now.

Do you know why we experience this?

We experience this because we are created for happiness.

We are searching for love because we are made by love, for love and to love!

We are searching for love but looking in wrong places, that is why we are hurt, empty and broken.

We are searching for love from what is outside of us rather than from what is inside.

We look for friends, fame, likers, honor, and attention. Yes, all of these are good but they are not the source of true love.

That's why we are not satisfied and that's why we look for more. That's why we are thirsty!

True love can be found not from what is outside of us but from what is inside.

When we start to look from the inside, we will find God, and "God is love" (1 John 4:8), we will find true love and true happiness.

The call of true love isn't out there at all, it's inside us.

The place of happiness where we need to move on is not there, far from us, no, it is here, in our heart, so close to us.

Happiness is not about going out, but going in. It's not about doing something new but letting God make everything new by saying yes to Him.

Move on!

Move on to the inside.

Say yes to God today.

2

GO TO THE OTHER SIDE

"Come, and you will see."

John 1:39

When I was seventeen years old, and in my second year in college, our professor in humanities invited the 2 top students in class for an *event*. Of course, I was not there. But one of them could not join so I replaced her, not because I was the top 3, but because I was the best friend of top 1 (the benefit of sticking with a genius).

On that *event*, we had a program about God, where many young people gathered. We had *merienda*, music and talk. When the program ended, honestly, I didn't understand anything. I could not even remember now what we discussed that time. The only thing I could remember was that my professor, who invited us, asked me, "We have a session again next week, do you want to join Gelo?". I said *yes* to her, not because of the program but because of the *merienda* and new friends.

After that, I continued attending those events, I learned that the organizers were the *Verbum Dei Catholic Missionaries*, and that my professor was a lay missionary. I started to understand the program and I felt like I'm getting closer to God, not realizing that in saying *yes* to my professor, I was

also saying *yes* to God, to be with Him and know Him more and more.

Together with my friends and the community, we persevered. Over time, we realized that God is making everything new. He gave us life, direction, meaning, purpose and true love.

I am not saying that I no longer experience difficulties and sadness, no, but I'm satisfied with what I have and God provided a lot. I found true love, and like how the popular song goes,

The search is over, He is with me all this time.

All these are not instant unlike in Instagram, where you just need to put a filter, then you're beautiful already. It is also not like instant *pancit canton* or 3 in 1 coffee. Knowing God entails hard work, effort and time.

Going to the other side, finding God and receiving true love requires perseverance. True love waits. That is love.

"Love is patient." (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

To journey with God, we need the help of each other.

We cannot do it alone. We need friends who can encourage us to say *yes* to God every day, even in the most difficult time.

With God, we will find true love.

Even though, let us say, you already have all the things in the world – money, fame, girlfriends, or whatever that may be, but does not know God, then happiness is incomplete.

But even though you only have a little, or even nothing – no money, no foods, no girlfriend, or no job, but you know that God is with you and you have faith, then you have found true love, happiness will be made complete, there's hope!

From that fact alone that your happiness comes from God, other things will follow. People will be drawn to you, they will help you, be with you and love you too.

Being with God is true love!

There is a story about five monkeys on top of a building and three of them decided to jump to the other building, to the other side.

How many monkeys do you think are left in the same building?

The answer is, still *five*!

Yes, the point here is, three of them just *decided* to jump to the other side but didn't really jump.

Today, we will decide and jump to the other side by saying yes to God, and this is His message to us:

“(Put your name here), move on from where you are, move on to where I am”

“Come, and you will see.” (John 1:39)

He's calling you by name.

Say *yes* to real happiness.

Say *yes* to true love.

Say *yes* to God.

Put your hands on your chest and whisper to God, “yes, yes, yes, I am with you God, on the other side.”

3

WAY TO HAPPINESS

"If I have all ... but do not have love, I am nothing."

1 Corinthians 13:2

May we begin by describing to you the ballpen I used while writing this, if it has a soul, do you think it's happy?

Definitely yes!

If it wasn't for this ballpen, I wouldn't be able to write and you couldn't be able to read this now. The ballpen is happy because it fulfilled the reason why it was made.

Now, if I use this same ballpen to open a can of sardines, do you think it will be happy?

Of course not!

The ballpen was not made to open a can. Therefore, if we forced it to do so, it will break and the can will not be opened.

The ballpen is happy whenever it does what it is meant to do, its purpose – to write a message, a purpose that came from knowing its identity – as a ballpen, an identity that came from its creator – man.

So are we.

One can only be truly happy and find fulfillment the moment he finds a purpose, a goal, a destination or an end. One can only find a purpose once he finds his real identity, and one can only find his real identity once he finds his creator – God.

There was this one guy in the office who is intelligent, active in social life, and serves the Church. One time he shared to me that despite all the good things he was doing, he was still not happy, to the point of having suicidal thoughts. He knew that something was missing, he needed to find a reason for all that he was doing. He needed to find a purpose. As time went by, the search for purpose confused and stressed him until he got tired of it. Thus, he decided to just go on in life without it. He then led a life like joining a competition without aiming for the prize, like travelling without a destination or joining a program without an objective.

Let us put on the table the same question he asked, "Why am I not happy?". Why do you think so?

For me, we are not happy every time we forget the value of our life and its purpose.

Whenever we just go with the flow and choose to exist but not live.

Let's admit it, we know people like this, or sometimes we ourselves; we don't want to get up from our bed. Why wake up if the only reason is to work for a job we don't want, to have money to buy things we don't really need, and to impress people who haven't got the slightest concern for us.

To be happy, we need a purpose.

The search for purpose is intrinsic to each one of us. One cannot say that he does not have it, but one can either get tired of searching for it or even rejects it, like a ballpen wasting its ink or telling itself that it is meant to open a can, thus, breaking its own life.

I will not tell you what your purpose is, but perhaps I can show you where you can look and search for it on your own.

Do not look outside, you will end up depressed.

Like I said, look inside.

Look at God.

God is love, our creator. In Him you will find your real identity as love, and with it you can find your purpose, which is for love.

Yes, you are made for love, for God.

Many of us live for fame, money, power, honor and pleasure. Having these as our purpose in living will lead us to fake happiness. Don't content yourself with what you have. You are meant for greater things. Go deeper!

I tell you, the one who tastes His love lacks nothing.

Friend, your life is for love!

4

WHAT TO DO NOW?

"Love your neighbor as yourself"

Luke 10:27

What should we do to be happy?

If a ballpen is for writing a message, then, it is happy when it is writing. Therefore, we can say that if our life is for love, then, we are happy when we are loving.

In this part, let us now focus not on the end but on the means, not on love but on loving.

Loving is not just one of the many options we can do in life; in such a way that we can ask ourselves, "What can we do later? Swimming, gaming, running, hiking, or loving?" No, it shouldn't be in that category. The least we can do is to categorize loving with breathing, drinking, or eating.

Loving is not optional but vital.

We ought to do *loving* in everything we do. We can do our own business such as talking, teaching, working, studying or even sleeping, but if without loving, then what is it for?

"If I had no love, I would be nothing." (1 Corinthians 13:2)

We are tired and sad not because we have a lot of things to do nor because nobody loves us, but because we don't love anything we do and we don't love anyone.

One does not die when he stops breathing, but when he stops loving.

"He who does not love remains in death" (1 John 3:14)

It is in loving God and loving others that we will find happiness and fulfillment. The summary of all we ought to do yesterday, today, and tomorrow is summarized in one sentence.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' (Luke 10:27)

The love of God we receive and the love we communicate back to Him is like the vertical line of the cross and our love to our neighbor is its horizontal line.

Loving our neighbor is the outpouring of the love we received from God. We can only love others in the measure that we love God; it is only in loving God that we can love others.

One may ask, *but how about the atheists?* If they truly love others, then they love God. The only difference is that they are not aware of it.

Our life indeed is for loving. But what kind of *loving* are we talking about?

One can love in many ways, like what we know in the *Five languages of love* by Gary Chapman – word of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service and physical touch.

One can love by saying *yes* or *no*.

Take for example my writing of this reflection, when I said *yes*, I was able to make a time to write. However, I had to say *no* to a good sleep in order to do so.

Saying *no* to something good can be saying *yes* for something better.

One can love by asking for forgiveness and by forgiving.

Love can be romantic, fraternal and paternal but above obligation, responsibility, and feelings, loving can go beyond it, namely, a *loving* that is universal, sacrificial and selfless.

A love that is not exclusive but inclusive.

A love that is willing to offer up one's own time, money and energy.

Every time I talk about time, money and energy, I am always reminded by one picture I saw in Facebook. When we were young, we have a lot of energy and time but no money. When we grew up as working professionals, we have money and energy, but no time. When we are old, we have time and money but no more energy. We cannot have it all (unless you're a rich kid without needing to work).

Loving means offering up all that we have today, no matter how little or big could it be.

A love that wills the good of the other.

A love that does not wait for any return.

A love that is not earned but given.

A love so selfless to the point of cleaning not one's own dirt but also that of the others, like the dirty feet of someone who walked the extra mile.

This kind of loving is not impossible for it has been done for us. *Someone* demonstrated it before us so that we can do it to others in return. That *someone* capacitated us. That *someone* is the face of loving, and that is Jesus.

Jesus is loving.

When one wants to see how it is to love, then one must see the image of Jesus on the cross.

That is how to love – universal, sacrificial, and selfless, and that is how to be truly happy.

This may seem ironic.

But yes.

This is our conviction.

5

THE HARD WORK OF LOVE

"Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."

John 15:13

Indeed, our happiness is not what this world offers, but what God offers.

Jesus said, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34)

This is the loving that is not merely liking, but willing.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:43)

Is it easy? Of course not. We're talking about real happiness and true love here, hello, surely it will be hard.

No man ever truly loved and was authentically happy without experiencing suffering (a cross). That's why it's better not to seek wisdom from those who hadn't experienced suffering.

Jesus was the happiest man who lived here in this world and yet is the most who suffered. It is from Him we seek for wisdom and guidance.

There is a song entitled *“Look, learn and live with me”* sang by *Mitziel Toledo*, a friend of mine in Cebu, where a part of the lyrics illustrates the guidance that Jesus gives,

*So look at me and have no fear
Learn from me to walk through the end
‘coz I understand to love is never that easy.
Fix your eyes on me, look and learn from me and live
with me.*

With Him we will not just love, but we will love to the fullest!

“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” (John 15:3)

Friend, give your life freely that you may find it fully, as what Jesus has done.

“No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.” (John 10:18)

If we want a *loving* that is strong and that lasts forever, then we must introduce someone to the real love—God. Guide that person in building a relationship with Him. In doing so, even if we go where God calls us to, that person has already received the love he needs in order to go and fulfill his purpose—to love in each moment every day.

Our mission then is to form people to be *loving*. Therefore, the best gift we can give someone is not physical bread but the bread of the Word of God where one can find love.

Preach the Word through your mouth as you speak, through your feet as you move, through your hands as you act, through your ears as you listen, and through your eyes as you see. Indeed, it is *only* in loving that one can find fulfillment.

Let us now answer the question, “What to do now?”

Now, we do *loving*, regardless of what the world tells us what we need to do, despite of the result that our mere eyes can see and despite of all the questioning of others, keep loving. As Mother Teresa said,

“People are often unreasonable, illogical and self centered; Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives; Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies; Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you; Be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight; Build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous; Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow; Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough; Give the world the best you've got anyway.

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and your God; It was never between you and them anyway."

Friend, loving is living, so love anyway, not later, not tomorrow, but today, now.

6

LIVE THE LIFE YOU LOVE AND LOVE THE LIFE YOU LIVE

"This is the day the Lord has made"

Psalm 118:24

Life is quite confusing. Isn't it?

Some say we need to plan it well so we can get what we want. But what are the things we can lose in doing so? Many of us are experiencing quarter-life and mid-life crisis because of working so much for the future, losing the present.

Some say we need to live in the present and let tomorrow handle itself. But when we look at these people who call themselves – *happy go lucky*, *free soul*, and *YOLO*, it seems that something is missing in them. They don't have a goal, a target or a purpose.

How about doing both?

Like a seaman – aim for the port while enjoying the wind. Live the life you love and love the life you live.

1. Live the life you love

What do you want to do? Who do you want to be? Where do you see yourself most contented?

There was once a group of people who dreamt that God will send them a savior. There was once a God who dreamt of a woman who will say yes to His plan. There was once a woman who hoped for the mercy of God to her people. There was a Man who set the world on fire and wished it were already burning!

The story of God is full of dreams, hopes, and plans. Who are we then not to have one?

Dream the life you love. Look ahead, and walk with faith.

All those dreams are such a part of you, they are a mirror of your soul so don't let them go. ("Bridge" by Ana Coimbra)

Dream big for our God is big.

Dream, yet do not live for tomorrow, losing today.

Make your dream a driving force to wake you up every morning then seize the day.

2. Love the life you live

If today is your last twenty-four hours, what will you do? Finish your bucket list? Gather your family and friends? Kiss them goodbye?

In the book *Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom, Morrie answered in a very strange way,

"Morrie mentions waking up and exercising, having sweet rolls for breakfast and then going swimming."

He would have friends over for lunch, one or two at a time so they could have a meaningful discussion. Then he would go for a walk and eat duck for dinner. The day would end with dancing and a deep sleep. A simple average day, full of the people and things he loved. He found perfection in the average, which according to Morrie's point of view was the whole point of life."

Amazing! Indeed, it is not in our hands whether we will still wake up or not. Therefore, seize the moment as if it's our last 24 hours!

Today is the day that the Lord has made!

Don't wait for next year or so to do the things that are of great importance.

God placed you where you are now and brought you the people you are with now for a great purpose.

Love them to the fullest and do what you're doing now as if it's the only thing that people will remember about you.

Friend, live the life you love and love the life you live.

You can be both a masterpiece and a work in progress at the same time.

7

FOR THOSE WHO WORK HARD

"Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles"

Matthew 5:41

This one is for you, for your current job and for your dream job. If you are working more than the regular working hours, this is for you. If you are driving the line, this is for you. If you're tired from work, hey, this is for you!

I woke up six in the morning feeling drowsy. It's that *season* again. That season when I stepped into the office thinking about the checklist of what I must do and meetings I need to attend. That season when I usually leave the office by midnight.

I've been working a lot. But I know I'm not alone. I know that you too. And so I wrote this.

When you experienced the *season* wherein you're putting extra time and effort at work or what you're doing is like a burden, worthless and pointless, you felt like you don't have a choice, right? The fact is, you have.

Today I will say to you, get up!

You're not lost, actually, you're on the right track. Crazy? I get a lot of that. Listen, spare me a minute, before you do whatever you will do. These are three things I want to share with you.

1. Do more than what you are asked to.

When you are asked to do a certain job, and lead a certain project, don't just do it, go the extra mile! They say, work-life balance is when you work eight hours a day and have a life after. Hey, not for me! Are they saying that you don't have a life within that 8 hours? Being dead for eight hours every day is not worth it. That kind of a work-life balance is a myth!

Here's the thing, you will only achieve work-life balance if you make your work your life and make your life your work.

That's why, go the extra mile, and when I say that, I mean, do your work with love and purpose. I am in IT doing the job of a project manager, systems analyst and a programmer but see, I'm still alive. If you'll ask me, is it my passion? I tell you, no, my passion is writing and preaching. But am I doing my best? With flying colors? Yes! Because I see my work as the way to my vision. During work, I find time where I can practice what I preach and after work, I make time for writing. That's extra mile!

I don't have time to complain how much my work eats my time, even in that *winter*, *midnight*, and *dark* seasons or whatever you call that time where in you are asked to work

overtime for weeks or for months. Instead, let's use these challenges as our stepping stone to our dreams.

How you do your work now is how you will do your dream work. Do it well. Be a good representation of God.

You're passionate, purpose-driven and young. You have the creative ideas, take charge, give all.

2. Do not work alone.

God didn't create you alone so why work alone? There's always someone out there who is willing to extend a hand and reach out if you asked. Unless you ask, you can never receive. It's not easy for me to learn this because I'm used to work my way alone, until I realized how heavy it is. It's,

“trying to carry the weight of the world, but I only have two hands”

Sounds familiar? I tell you, it's beautiful to work with a team.

Outside the office, there's also your team, your community. You are not alone in your journey right now.

They say that the best teacher is our *own* experience, but hey, that's a *no* again for me. The best teacher is *others'* experience. Why go to the same trouble that others have committed already?

Read books and find people who have the right wisdom you need. In our community I shared some of my thoughts and worries about work; they're always helping me by giving me pieces of advice.

Find a team or find a community.

In the end, we are all just working under one ID and under one *company*, God's.

3. Give yourself a treat

One trip to Mount Batulao or a Cream-O chocolate will not harm you. You are a job well done, don't wait for your boss to treat you, treat yourself, now.

My tip, the best treats you can give to yourself is a rest in the arms of God in prayer. Attend a prayer meeting, retreat or recollection so that God can always guide you in every step you take.

My friend, work more than what you are asked to, do not work alone and give yourself a treat.

I pray for you. May you achieve that dream and vision in your heart, in Jesus' name.

8

BORN TO BE CURIOUS

"Now this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ"

John 17:3

Do you really know God?

I will not tell you who God is, it's your job to figure Him out in your life, but I'll just tell you one thing,

Don't be ignorant!

Don't stop searching for God and being curious about Him.

In my life, I met a lot of people from different places and in different realities – poor, rich, healthy, sick, young, and old. I travelled around Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, a stop by in Europe, and a month in Colombia.

I noticed that people really are different in a lot of areas, but one thing I've confirmed is that everyone is born good. Without an exception, everyone has good intentions in life. It is only the ways and means that are sometimes not proper.

Our problem is not that we are born evil; no, we are just *ignorant*.

Ignorant about our own identity, purpose, and mission in life. Ignorant about who really God is.

This ignorance about God leads to many consequences, such as discrimination, inequality, and injustice.

Only when we seek to *know* that we can start to *ask*. Knowledge awakens the longing to possess. We must know God before we can want Him in our life, before He can transform us better.

Love, believe, and hope for God, yes, but also question, argue, and hate God. All of us needs to pass that stage in order to know Him better and have more faith in Him.

Friend, search for God today.

Every day, be curious about God, ask where is He amidst the different situations, and you'll see Him speaking to you, as love.

Ask me, do I really know God?

This knowledge is not something that will come from my flesh and mind but is a gift from the Father, which I believe I can receive only if I seek and do His will, by His grace, daily.

9

WHO'S YOURS?

"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock"

Matthew 7:24

They say, *"You are what you worship,"* but who is it that we worship? All of us worship someone, whether we like it or not, know it or not.

Let's look at three major realities that we worship.

1. Things

Are you buying things you don't need? With the money you don't have? To impress the people you don't like?

I guess all of us fell in this kind of lifestyle. There was a time in my life that I was working a lot – overtime, weekdays, and weekends. The only thing left to do whenever I come home is to sleep. I'm too enticed by the things I got from working.

One moment, I had lost my motivation and was left devastated by the responsibilities I was carrying. I focused too much in my work that I forgot the real purpose why I'm working and why I'm living.

I was living to work, not working to live.

At some point, tensions and difficulties are part of growing up. We need to work hard to earn, but when it's too much, to the point of revolving our life around money and material possessions we receive from work, then it's definitely not right.

There is something more beyond the things *lower* than our dignity. We have souls. We should control the material things we gain and not be controlled by it.

Work to live and not live to work.

2. People

Have you been left behind by a person you care so much? How did you move on?

After ending a relationship, the longer the time we move on, signifies how deeper we love the person, but some time, it also signifies how we have mistakenly made them the center of our life.

There is a song from Air Supply that says,

"Girl, you're every woman in the world to me. You're my fantasy, you're my reality. You're everything I need, you're everything to me"

If you make someone your world, and that someone left you, then you will really end up *"lonely is the night"*.

It's good to love so much, even loving ourselves. In fact, we are called to love to the most, but we should not let ourselves or other people be the one we worship.

As human, we are unstable, imperfect and fragile. We should not let each other, only be the center of our life.

There must be someone beyond us.

3. God

If we place God as the center of our lives, then we can have that assurance that he will give us what we need (sometimes, even what we want).

In fact, all that we have now and the people we are with, came from Him.

All the things we have can be taken away from us, all the people we love can leave us, but it is God who will never change.

Friend, let us make the daily option to choose God as the center of our life. Worship Him with all our life.

If He is the axis where our world rotates, for sure we will never break down.

Make God our fundamental option.

10

YOUR NEW CLOTHES WILL NOT CHANGE YOU

"Put on the new self, created in God's way"

Ephesians 4:24

Do you want a brand-new car? A latest phone model? A new and improved laundry soap?

Very interesting of us, we always want something new. It's as if we were created for newness. We have an endless unsatisfied appetite and unlimited desire for new things.

Is it something wrong? No! It's perfectly right!

It is our nature to seek for newness because we are made in the image and likeness of God who is a God of newness!

There are two types of newness though, *newness from the outside* and *newness from the inside*.

The first aim for newness from what is outside of us, like a new job, new girlfriend, or new place to live, wishing that these things may renew us inside, but ending up in failure. Wearing *new clothes* will not change who we are.

The second is aiming for newness from what is inside of us, a more profound kind of newness. In this way, one does not seek for something new outside, but for a new relationship

with God daily, and from it one sees all things with new eyes, a better one.

This kind of newness was what Paul insisting, “You should put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires.” (Ephesians 4:22)

The desire for external newness can be deceitful; we work and work and work to gain something new but end up not renewed at all, regretting the wasted time and energy, and worse, our life becomes a true self-destruction.

“Be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth”. (Ephesians 4:23-24)

Friend, the renewal that God offers is the new and improved *us*.

We ourselves is what He is renewing, daily, by His love, and from that, a newness from the outside will follow, which will also renew others, in love.

Put on the *new self*, not the *new clothes*.

Let us pray, “God, renew me in your love.”

11

PERHAPS WE CAN DO MORE

"In Him we live and move and have our being"

Acts 17:28

What is the first thing you do in the morning? Check out notifications on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn or Twitter? Think about the list of things you need to do for the whole day? Drag about the bad things that happened yesterday?

There are a lot of things we can do the moment we wake up, but admit it, one thing we often forget is to give thanks. Every morning, every breath, and every action is a gift from God.

"In Him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

How come we forget to give thanks? Maybe because a *new day* becomes so common that we overlook its importance and tend to take it for granted. It shouldn't be, because the truth is, not everyone receives another day!

One thing that may help us appreciate again the gift of today is by looking at some data that we can gather throughout the world. According to World Meters, as I write this, there are already more than twenty million deaths just for this year. As you read this, someone is dying. I'm not trying to scare

you but I hope you understand how important this chance is.

The new day we received today is a gift, but it's also a task.

Like what Uncle Ben said,

"The greater the power, the greater the responsibility".

We now have in our hands, a power to do something, so what to do with it? Well, probably we can just go on our day and do the usual things we do, drink coffee, go to work, eat lunch, watch Netflix, play games, walk around, then sleep . . . or perhaps we can do more!

I believe that as humans, we are capable to do more, not just using our day for ourselves but for the good of many and all the living creatures.

There was a disturbing quote by Jonas Salk, who said,

"If all the insects were to disappear from the earth, within 50 years all life on earth would end. If all human beings disappeared from the earth, within 50 years all forms of life would flourish."

And he's right. So, what are we here for?

We are here for a reason, to be stewards of the world. It is our responsibility to take care of each and every creature in it.

Now, as Christians, we ought to be more responsible. We are not just called to be steward of the world, but also to be bearers of the Word.

"He calls on all people to change their ways. He has already set a day on which he will judge the world with justice through a man He has appointed." (Acts 18:30-31)

But how can we bring the Word of God to the world?

Like what Michael Jackson said,

"Take a look at yourself and make that change."

We can start by bringing the Word first to ourselves, by knowing Him, by praying, by reading the Bible, by attending the School of the Word weekly, by living it out and many more.

Just bear in mind that knowing the Word of God is not a one-time process. It's a daily process, a step-by-step walk with the Holy Spirit who's guiding us. Just as what Jesus said, *"I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit, he will guide you to all the truth."* (John 16:12)

The more we know the Word of God, the more we can bring the Word to the world.

Friend, let us give thanks to God for another bright and sunny summer day. Take care of the people He placed in our

life by loving them and sharing our faith. And together let us know God better through prayer.

12

YOU GOT A FRIEND

"I have called you friends."

John 15:15

Do you know a person who will laugh if ever you fall down in a tunnel full of dirt, way before helping you?

Can you name someone who enters your house without knocking and suddenly grabs a sandwich from your refrigerator without your consent?

Is there somebody who listens attentively to your complaints and existential questions in life while stargazing on your rooftop?

If yes, then you got a friend! You can meet millions of people in your lifetime but only those who have been close to you, who have been with you for so long and been with you in your ups and downs, that you can truly call as *friends*.

Jesus is calling you today as His friend.

"I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends." (John 15:15)

Why call us as friends?

Because as he said, *"I have told you everything I have heard from my Father."* (John 15:15).

Jesus made known to us his love and the love of God the Father. He came to this world for us and to be with us.

He is the closest person to us, closer than our parents, siblings, classmates, teachers or partners.

He knows us inside out, from the number of our hair-strands down to the number of our cells and even more. He knows our desires and goals.

He's been with us way before our parents planned us, up until this very point that you're reading this. He's in our happiest, loneliest and most monotonous ordinary days. Jesus has been with us all this time, reminding us, "I got your back, pal".

In Jesus, you got a friend.

Are we worthy of this friendship?

With all our shortcomings, disobedience, and running away from His commandments, definitely not! But Jesus tells us, *"You did not choose me, it was I who chose you."* (John 15:16)

It is this unconditional love of Jesus, given, not earned, that draws us closer to Him to receive joy.

Recall the joyous moments in your life – it can be a hike in a very steep and high mountain, a travel to Singapore, or a wedding celebration. Who were with you in those

moments? I bet you were with a friend. The happiest moments in our life are those in which we are with a friend.

If a friend magnifies our joy, then Jesus, our friend, completes our joy.

"I have told you all this, that my own joy may be in you and your joy may be complete" (John 15:11)

In Jesus, you got a friend, a confidant, and a partner. The world may leave us but Jesus never will. This friendship is so true and good that it's not meant to be kept in secret but to be shared to all.

Together, let us share to many this mutual friend of ours, as He says, *"Go and bear much fruit, fruit that will last"* (John 15:16)

13

START SMALL

*"It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown
it is the largest of plants"*

Matthew 13:32

Some people have told me that I do a lot of things – working within 10am-7pm on weekdays, hosting a radio program, preaching, travelling, writing and so on. I'm like, *"Naaah"*, it is not me, it's God who is working in me whenever I do good things. In fact, I'm the reverse. If it's just me working, I don't do a lot of things that I am supposed to do, worst, I do the opposite!

There are times when I don't share reflections in my blog. It's not that I don't have it, it's just that I opted to sleep than to type and post it.

Then one time, while in a spiritual retreat, the speaker mentioned my name, telling to the crowd that what I'm doing sets an example for many – using the social media to share the Word of God. I was like *"Wow thank you"* and *"Oooops!"*. Maybe it's a sign from God for me to continue and be consistent.

Friend, start small and be consistent, rather than starting big but stopping after a while because of difficulty.

Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants" (Matthew 13:31-32).

The little act of goodness and option to love – like turning off the lights when no one is using, putting additional effort in a dish we cook, or picking up a kitten in the middle of the street, rather looks small, but is enough.

God will slowly work with our bits of seasoning to cook a delicious meal, or let us say, a better life for us and for many, as he continued, "It becomes a large bush and the birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches".

In case you're not much a fan of nature, Jesus gave another parable, where for sure you can relate to – food!

The best version of yourself, "is like a yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened." (Matthew 13:33)

You see, it's not the noticeable big things you did that forms you, it's the unnoticeable small things – like a seed hidden underneath the ground and a yeast that is not visible when mixed into the dough.

Friend, make an option to love in a small way today and don't forget, be consistent.

14

ASK AND RECEIVE

*"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find;
knock and the door will be opened to you"*

Matthew 7:7

Have you tried asking but not receiving?

It says that when we ask, we receive, but how come that most of the time we do not receive? Often, we rather just not ask anymore, we become shy. Hard to admit but most of us are now shy type. We are shy to ask for an extra rice and for the last piece of pizza. We are shy to ask for help and shy to ask God. Sometimes we would rather get lost than to ask directions from a stranger!

If we do not ask then we will not be snubbed, judged or rejected, but, big chance, will not also not receive!

"You do not possess because you do not ask." (James 4:2)

Don't be shy, ask your friends, ask the strangers, ask your teachers, ask God; in any rate, if you want it, ask for it!

Now, there are two obvious things that can happen when we ask, either we receive it or not.

When we asked God, but didn't receive, does it mean that He cannot hear us? I doubt that.

Let's tap the help of the apostle James here. He said, *"You ask but do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions."* (James 4:3)

Maybe it's because what we asked is wrong, deep inside we have a selfish desire. God is God of all good, He never gives us what is not good. In case we received some, it's not from Him, it's from the world. The difference is, if it's from the world, there will be no contentment, no peace and no real joy, just a fleeting and a temporal one.

Time to check up our hearts, what are my intentions for the things I asked from God?

When we asked with good intentions, how come we still don't receive? For this, I will say, relax.

God has His own timeline. He gives good things in His proper timing to magnify the impact to many. Be patient, this is when God is asking you to be faithful and persevering.

Now, when we received what we asked, congratulations, we got it! But remember, God gave it to us not to exult ourselves, but to help us serve more.

If we serve more, God will give more.

Friend, let us be humble servants.

By being humble, we recognize that we are not the center of the world, it does not rotate only for us, but for each one of us.

We can acknowledge that this life we have is not our own drama, we are not the protagonist of everything, it's God. It's His drama and He calls us to be the best role player according to His bigger and better plan. We realize that serving Him and others are more fun and joyful than just always thinking of our own good alone.

When we humble ourselves, we open our hearts to accept the will of God in our life, letting Him give us what we need.

In the end, it's not about asking what we want, it's about asking what God wants us to ask from Him. In doing so, we can serve more and live out our life to the most, more than what we asked for.

Friend, be humble, ask, and receive.

15

IT SHALL BE DONE

"Whoever ... does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it shall be done for Him."

Mark 11:23

Do you do a lot of things in life? Received a lot of things? But still fruitless?

There is an interesting story when Jesus got hungry and saw a fig tree with many leaves. Assuming it has lots of fruits, he went over to see it, but it turned out the other way. There was no fig fruit, only leaves. Jesus then seemed to get angry and cursed it saying, *"May no one ever eat of your fruit again!"* (Mark 11:12-14)

It reminded me of a Snickers commercial that says,

"You're not you when you're hungry."

Jesus didn't seem to be Himself, who is loving; instead, He was cursing. But upon further reflection, we can see that Jesus is teaching us another lesson, to *"let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good."* (Romans 12:9)

The fig tree is the evil that we need to hate. Like in our life, it represents the wrong way we live it.

Like the fig tree, outside we look so happy and successful. We advertise ourselves as someone who is complete, therefore we attract people to ourselves, to taste its fruits, but there is none. We look fruitful but in fact we are fruitless, we are just full of leaves. The leaves represent the things we do and receive to cover up our emptiness; we can be full of leaves but still fruitless.

Knowing that Jesus loves the sinner but hates the sin, Jesus here is not cursing us but the wrong way of living our life. He knew that it does not help us and others.

The day after Jesus cursed the tree, they saw it again and it has withered. Amazed by what happened, Peter mentioned it to Jesus. In reply Jesus said, *"Whoever . . . does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it shall be done for Him."* (Mark 11:23)

After denouncing what is bad, Jesus is giving us a renewal. A chance to turn back from our old way of living and change our life to better. He is giving us the assurance that we can be a better and fruitful person if we will ask for it.

If you believe that you can change then it shall be done to you.

But how can we ask without any doubt in our heart?

This seems to be impossible. Honestly speaking, we have doubt in everything we do, even just a tiny one.

Yes, we doubt ourselves because we knew we are not perfect, but Jesus is telling us to put our trust not only to

ourselves but to Him who is the Son of God, the fullness of humanity, the One who created everything.

His love can overshadow all the doubts in our life.

Friend, denounce what is evil, hold on to what is good, and always trust Jesus that He will make all things new.

16

GOD GIVES SIGNS

"These signs will accompany those who believe"

Mark 16:17

Do you believe in signs? When you don't know what to choose, you start to ask for it. Don't you? How can you say that it is really from God?

I'm not so fond of asking signs but I remember there was one time when I badly asked for it. I wanted to talk to my office crush but I was not sure if she would respond to me. I asked God to give me signs if I need to push through. On that same day, while walking down the stairs, there, I saw her, going up the escalator, smiling in front of me. What a clear sign!

One time also, I felt tired in sharing the Word of God – it seemed fruitless and felt like nobody cares. Then a minute after that, someone chatted me, telling me that she was blessed by what I shared. Woah! Thank God!

Also, talking one time to my friend, a doctor, she told me that she has found her *calling*, but still cannot live it out because of other responsibilities she needed to do. One day, while she was eating an imported food, she felt like something was wrong. Even though it's a foreign food, the taste shouldn't be like that. Then she discovered that the

food expired a long time ago, but she already consumed everything!

As a doctor, she knew that eating expired foods with *botulinum toxin* can lead to a fatal condition, worst, sudden death, and to mention that she also has a sensitive stomach. She knew that something bad can happen to her, so she prayed to God telling Him “God please keep me alive, if you do, then you really want me to live out my calling”. Twenty-four hours had passed, she felt nothing, no bad signs at all, she was totally okay. From then on, she found the concrete sign she was looking for to live out her call.

She drank something poisonous but was not hurt; this is one of the many signs that Jesus gave to those who believe in Him.

Jesus gives signs.

Before he ascends into heaven, he told the disciples that “Signs like these will accompany those who have believed” (Mark 16:17), and then he elaborates them. Jesus could have just said to them to preach the gospel without needing to tell them about signs, but he didn’t. He needed, I wonder why?

St Paul said, “Walk by faith not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7) probably because we are just humans. We walk by faith, yes, but to be honest, most of the time we also need to see things to believe and be motivated.

Signs could also be a confirmation that what we are doing is the Lord's work and will.

My belief is that He is accompanying us throughout our journey and He is loving us, so that we may have faith that He is with us.

We doubt a lot of things. I get that. We even sometimes doubt the existence of Jesus (mysteriously not of Aristotle and Socrates who lived before him). But one thing we don't doubt, for sure, are the miracles we experienced and witnessed.

What kind of miracle? Like someone who died then rose again after an hour? Maybe some experienced that, but not me.

You know what is a miracle for me? Three things.

First, my mother. All the mothers gave birth to a child, except my mom. She gave birth to a legend (I bet my siblings will claim that it's them)!

Second, the moment when I met God in prayer. Like what Mark Twain said,

"The two most important days in your life are the day you were born and the day you find out why."

I found my *why* in God.

Third, the continuous miracle I see every day in my life.

When people are healed and consoled when their voice are heard of, when their pain is shared when someone is with them. When people understand each other, when countries build communion, when relationships are restored and more.

God gives signs.

Some signs may lead us to difficulties and trials, but always, in the end, if it is from God, they are the most fruitful.

Friend, hold on to patience and watch for the sign, everything in His time.

17

BE BRAVE, BE BOLD, BE YOU!

"Do not be afraid!"

Mark 6:50

You cannot do this! You are weird! That's impossible! Forget it! Stop it!

These are just some of the many words that discouraged us to be who we are meant to be.

For no apparent reason, some people just like the feeling of bringing us down, making us hesitant, timid, or self-conscious in doing the things we know we should do and being the person, we know we should be. If we are different, they do not accept us, they make us paralyzed by fear and excessive caution, making us boxed in our safe haven.

Many times, people reject our new ideas and approach, leaving us hiding in what is *regular* and *usual*, living a life in the most comfortable way as possible and doing things the easiest way. But at the end of the day, we know that something deep inside of us is decreasing, we become rusty and musty, and we become empty.

Life should not be like this.

When the world calls you to be coward, be shy, and be like others, God is shouting the opposite way – be brave, be bold and be you!

Be brave, for Jesus said, *“Do not be afraid”* (Mark 6:50), he will accompany you in this journey. *“I am with you always, to the end of the world”* (Matthew 28:20)

Be bold, for you are called not to live your life only for yourself but for God and for others, like the first disciples, *“So he was standing with them, associating openly with them, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord”* (Acts 9:28).

Be you, God wants you to leave a mark in this world, pass beyond what is familiar, and be the person that He had in mind when He created you.

There will be a lot of challenges in life. Conformity, complacency, and mediocrity are some of them, yet always remember that God, the eternal newness, is constantly telling you to get up!

Open your eyes, ears, and heart to Him and live the best life. In return, make others be so by being a passionate missionary, enthusiastic about sharing true life.

Friend, take the step forward and welcome the Lord's surprise in your life.

Live the life to the most!

18

FACE, FISH, FIST, PIECE, OR PEACE?

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you."

John 14:27

What do you seek the most? A beautiful face? A delicious fish for lunch? A strong fist? A piece of treasure? Or a self-peace?

We all seek for peace.

I wonder... what peace am I receiving? Is it the peace that comes from Jesus or from the world? How would I know?

Let us look at the world and Jesus.

The world offers a peace that is outside of us. The peace that comes from possessing. A peace in doing our own will and other's will.

We know we are in peace if we have a stable job, an insurance, or a secured house. We have peace if we have someone with us, a friend or a partner. We can have peace if we achieved our own dreams or the dreams of those we look up to. See, nothing is actually bad from the peace that the world gives, all are good I may say.

The question is, what if all these things pass away? Will we still be at peace?

Jesus have shown us another kind of peace. A peace that is inside of us. The peace that comes from self-giving. A peace in doing God's will.

The world shamed him, spat to his face, mocked him, destroyed everything He had, and took away everything that He is.

Then the world offered Him peace; to stay away from the cross, run back to safety, be with His friends, celebrate life while He have it, spoil it, live!

Jesus then, sweating with blood, knelt down and begged, "Father, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done." (Luke 22:42) He chose another path. He willed the will of God. He lived to die for us to live in Him.

We are Jesus.

The world is offering us their peace. We can take it, benefit from it, and live with it.

Then on the other side, the peace that comes from God the Father. He never impose, He only propose.

"My peace I give to you," says the Lord.

A peace not from the world but from the Creator of the world. A peace we can live and die with. A peace with an inevitable trouble, yet fully present, with Christ.

19

WHO AM I?

"I have come to set the world on fire"

Luke 12:49

What am I built of?

In building our life, St. Paul said, "Some will use gold or silver or precious stones in building on the foundation; others will use wood or grass or straw" (1 Corinthians 3:12).

Honestly, I don't know how to categorize it. There are no golds or silver our house, what we have are precious stones, precious because the Word of God is encrypted to it.

Once, we had an activity in our rosary to pick one of those precious stones. I got 1 Corinthians 13:3 that says, "If I don't love, I am nothing." I suppose this is the best material we can use to build our identity.

Are you building yours with love?

How would we know? What are the measures?

St Paul described, "The quality of each person's work will be seen when the Day of Christ exposes it. For on that Day fire will reveal everyone's work; the fire will test it and show its real quality." (1 Corinthians 3:13)

By the fire of the love of Christ!

"I have come to set the world on fire and how I wish it were already blazing." (Luke 12:49)

His love is so great and perfectly forged that it was on fire but not burned. Like the bush that Moses found, *"burning but not consumed."* (Exodus 3:2)

Our love too is tested by fire – either we are consumed or forged by it. This fire tests the quality of our life of love, not only on the Second coming, but every day.

The fire of waking up early in the morning, the fire of community life, the fire of doing our jobs, the fire of helping others or the fire of doing the mission. Those are the fires that test us.

Are we consumed or forged by it?

Amidst this fire, God is working, if we can only recognize Him as the blacksmith.

The blacksmith is the one doing the dirty work, not us. Yes, we are burned and smashed every day, but He's the one, totally doing the hard work.

In Sirach 38:28, we can see a blacksmith full of dedication in forging a masterpiece.

"The heat from the fire sears his skin as he sweats away at the forge", imagine that!

His skin is being dried, withered and blackened. Exactly the opposite of what we are doing. We drink tomato juice to have softer skin and use papaya soap to have a whiter complexion. Moreover, the blacksmith is sweating a lot, unlike us, always looking for aircon.

"The clanging of the hammer deafens him as he carefully watches the object he is working to take shape."

Around our neighbors, we hear karaoke or sound trip as early in the morning, quite irritating, but for the blacksmith, he is willing to resist all the noise.

The blacksmith carefully watches us, unlike the three disciples who slept during the agony of Jesus in the garden.

"He takes great pains to complete his task, and will work far into the night to bring it to perfection."

What is our pain in comparison with the pain of God, the blacksmith?

It's like a drop of water compared to an ocean, like a small man compared to all men in a city, in a country or in a world.

He takes great pain not just for us to be complete but to be brought into perfection.

God works over time to build you, me, all of us.

St. Paul is inviting us to build our identity. Building it is not just about how much love we can give, but by how much love from God we can recognize and receive.

We can be what the blacksmith wills us, that is enough, for that is already the masterpiece. This is all that we need to be. When Jesus comes again, it would be as if He don't need to burn us anymore, for He already did, and we were not consumed, but forged, by His grace.

Share the love and so the pain, as He shares His to us.

Again, who am I?

I am love because I am built of love.

20

DON'T LOOK AT THEM, LOOK AT ME!

"As I have loved you, so you also should love one another"

John 13:34

Love is patient. Is it?

How come the first ever characteristic of love, as defined by St Paul is *patient*?

Why not kind? Why not hopeful? Why not generous?

Recalling my experience of love, I can fully agree that love is patient, or in another way, *a long suffering* of self-giving.

Perhaps my mother will agree with it, remembering those times she nurtured me, took care of me when I was sick, held me when I was cold, and lifted me up when I was down.

It is also true when we love someone special; we wait for them for so long, we try our best to understand them, and we stay with them when no one else wants to.

The next reason could be because patience is the closest and greatest experience of St Paul with God.

God shared His love to Paul by being patient; therefore, Paul's best act of love is by doing the same, by being patient

to his disciples, to the people who persecuted him, and to the people he converted.

Indeed, we encounter God in so many ways. Now, He is telling us **“Love as I have loved you.”**

Jesus didn't say to love as He has loved Paul, Peter, or John. He said as I have loved *you*!

Don't compare the love of God you received with others. He loves you in a very personal way. Don't look at them, look at Jesus!

If He loves you by being generous, then be generous.

If He loves you through music, then do the same music for others.

If He loves you through His words, then preach His Words to those who are searching for it.

“Love as I have loved you.”

You have your own way of being a Christian in the world of today, do so.

Only God can give you boundaries and only God can set you out of it.

21

BE CHILDLIKE

"You have revealed them to the childlike"

Matthew 11:25

Be childlike, not childish! There's a world of difference in it.

There is this one girl in front of our house, named Krishnia. Every time she sees me she smiles so big from ear to ear (maybe my face looks funny) and then she calls me *"Father!"*

Because of her innocence, I choose to play along with her. I wonder how genuine her happiness is? Sometimes I wish I can be four years old again and be as totally joyful as her.

She was lifting up our soul before we go and do our mission. She was someone willing to listen to our stories and teachings.

Like her, Jesus is inviting us to be childlike, open to receive His gracious will for our own sake and the sake of many.

"Adulting" opens us to the real world, through experiences and knowledge, but sometimes it's just too much. We form our mind but not our spirit, like a robot without a soul.

Being intelligent is good (it has its place for the society and knowledge of God), but there are truths in life that go

beyond our intellect and reason, so as to have faith in its Creator.

For instance, by science, measurement, and test, we can know a person but not completely. There are aspects in life that cannot be measured by these things, such as human spirit, identity, and will.

A man full of reason alone thinks He can contain the world in his small brain. He believes he can measure and calculate anything. He is not excited with anything. He has a lot of opinion but always bored in life. He only believes in what human eyes can see.

On the other hand, a man full of faith (and reason) believes that the world is too big to be held, therefore, he is open to every wonder, surprise, and beauty stored in it. His life is full of excitement. He is someone who truly loves because he always trusts, hopes and perseveres despite all odds. He thinks life is more than what our mere eyes can see.

Jesus exclaimed, *"I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned, you have revealed them to the child like"*.

Indeed, the wiser we are in our own sight, the more foolish we are in God's eye.

Be reasonable and faithful.

Be adult enough to love like Christ and childlike enough to receive and live it.

The more we open our hearts to God, the more we discover His gifts in this world, unpacking it day by day.

Friend, this is how much He loves us.

"Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will." (Matthew 11:26)

22

TRUE HAPPINESS

"There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish."

John 6:9

Have you experienced a moment when someone looked up and you also looked up, as if there is something happening above you?

Jesus did the same. One moment when he was teaching, he "raised his eyes and saw that a large crowd was coming to Him" (John 6:5). It's as if Jesus is inviting us to see what He is seeing – 5,000 men (not yet counting the women and the children)!

He then asked Philip, "Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?", Philip was very smart, he was like an accountant or a mathematician when he answered, "Two hundred days' wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little." (John 6:7) Very good! But wrong answer!

Look again at the question, Jesus asked *where*, but Philip's answer was *how much*. It's as if he was jumping already to the conclusion that they cannot feed them all, he was worried.

The right answer to the question of *where* is “from God”, “from you yourself, Jesus.” He is the source of all providence. All that we have and we will have come from Him. Another possible answer is “from you, yes you who is reading this, from your self-giving.

Then another disciple (or let's say, student) came, Andrew. He answered, “There is a boy here who has five loaves and two fishes; but what good are these for many?” (John 6:9)

If Philip's answer was almost like “*we cannot*”, Andrew's answer was like, “*we don't have enough*”. He almost got it right, but he complained and doubted!

Do you know who got the right answer?

It's the one who didn't speak at all, the one who didn't worry, the one who didn't doubt and complain, the one who just trusted, that one was the *boy*!

I wonder why it was a boy who offered food and not an old man. It's as if the message is that, as we grow old, we become more of a worrier than a warrior, we become doubting than believing, we start complaining than thanking.

Friend, like the boy, fully trust that God will provide.

That five loaves and two fishes of the boy, offered to Jesus, was multiplied, not x2 or x10 or x100, but more than x1000!

What do you have right now? Your talents? Gifts? Skills? If you offer them with all trust and humility like the boy, Jesus will multiply it to feed many hungry souls!

What part of your body can you use to serve Jesus?

Can it be your eyes to see those who are lost?

Can it be your ears to listen to those in sorrow?

Can it be your hands to tap the back of those who feel broken?

Can it be your lips to share inspiration to those who are tired?

Or, can it be your feet to walk with those who are lonely?

Give, give and give.

True happiness is found in giving, not in getting.

You will see that what you have will be more than what the hungry people needs.

Continue giving. The truth is, when you give, you do not only feed others, but you also feed yourself. There is an unexplainable joy and gladness in giving without expecting for a return. You know why? Because it is the will of God.

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me." (Matthew 25:35-36)

Give.

In the end of this life, we will all hear the same words,

"Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.". (Matthew 25:40)

23

HAPPINESS AT ITS FINEST

"But do not have love, I gain nothing"

1 Corinthians 13:3

Do you know that almost all of us are generous?

Many of my friends, when asked, give a portion of their salary to their parents, while some give to other causes, such as NGOs, feeding programs, or the Church.

We all are generous at some point, but we must admit that most of the time we expect for a return, as a famous business saying goes "What can I get in return?" We give, give and give in order to take, take and take.

If you think that life is only "give and take," then you do not know yet Jesus. He already changed the trend from "give and take" to "give and give."

Jesus said to his disciples *"You have heard that it was said, 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'."* (Matthew 5:38)

Until now we can still see the same idea in the movies we watch and people we talk with. It's as if we are entitled of having something, that every time we give, we must get something back.

Are we born with cash in our hands or a necklace around our neck? No! We're all born with nothing, but why do we act as if we are entitled to have everything? This is what Jesus broke!

When you give, give more! When something is taken away from you, give more! Unlimited giving!

Jesus exemplified generosity at its finest,

"When someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other one to him as well. If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic, hand him your cloak as well. Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles. Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow." (Matthew 5:39-42)

As St. Paul further explained it,

"If I give everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing." (1 Corinthians 13:3)

Friend, let us give with love and through love, lest it will be of no value.

The gain we're waiting will not come from someone here in this world, but from God himself, and that gain will be your true happiness.

24

THE WORLD IS BIGGER THAN YOU THINK

"The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest"

Matthew 9:37-38

When Rudy (my friend) and I were walking to our school for our Spanish class, we saw a woman on the sidewalk, sitting and taking a selfie, along with her pouty lips and sexy pose. Her face is a face willing to tweak in anyway just to get some likes. We were in silence when we walked by, but as we passed through her, I looked at Rudy and he looked at me, then we laughed!

That woman seemed desperate for attention, like KSP or *"kulang sa pansin"* in Filipino and I was a bit disgusted towards her (sorry, just being honest with my wrong feelings). Why was she doing it? What was she looking for? If it was Jesus who saw her, what would he think and feel about her? How would He see her?

The day after, we went to Ayala Mall Cebu and passed by *Timezone*. There, we saw a lot of people playing games, one that caught our attention was the guard. He's playing too! My impression there was that he's not doing his duty or maybe it's part of his job to inspect if the arcade is working,

let's give him the benefit of the doubt. But in any case, why was he doing it? How would Jesus see him?

There is a story of Fr. Jaime Bonet, founder of Verbum Dei, when he went out to the street and saw a man walking to the brothel, or let's say *prostitute bar*. Normally, we see those people as dirty, disgusting and weak, yet Jaime saw him in another way. What he saw is a man looking for love but searching in a wrong place.

Like Jaime, Jesus also went out. He visited towns and villages where he preached, taught and healed them, and as he looked up, he saw the crowd looking at him, with the same eyes as the woman who's taking a selfie, the guard playing in arcade, and the man entering the prostitute bar. The eyes of people who are looking for true love, yet no one is telling them where to find it. They are worried and helpless, like a sheep without a shepherd.

"At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them" (Matthew 9:36). He was not only seeing the crowd at that moment, there, he saw all humanity, he saw all those who died, those who are living, and those who are to live. He saw me, he saw you, he saw all of us today.

Moved by compassion, he said to the disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest." (Matthew 9:37-38), or in other words, Jesus said, **"Go and form apostles!"**.

Like Jesus, we need to go out to see, and when we see, we will be moved by compassion, and when we are moved, we are urged to bring true life, and when we bring it, we form apostles, and when we form, we are living out the call of God in our life!

Jaime Bonet echoed the same urgency of the mission when he said these words (taken from the book *Forming Apostles* by *Verbum Dei*),

"You must be aware that all the formation you receive is not for you but for the good of many."

Imagine that! Whatever good we receive is for someone out there, even this message!

Then he continued by saying,

"While you have found abundance and barns full of grain, the whole city is dying of hunger."

The same reason that moved Jesus!

Then Fr. Jaime left us a question,

"What are you doing with so much wealth that you have?"

What am I doing with it?

Most of the time I have this *kalyo* (callus), that even if I see what's wrong or what's lacking, I don't feel anything. I am not moved to help the people or the situation. Maybe these

are the moments when I am disconnected with God, when (or... because) I forgot to pray.

PRAY! The more we relate to Jesus, the more we will have the same eyes as Him, to see the situations the way He sees it. In prayer we will realize that the world does not rotate just for you or me, but for all of us.

There were moments when Jesus helped me to see and be moved.

When I was appointed as the CCC, Communications Committee Coordinator of our community in Manila, the first thing we did is to conduct a survey, to hear the pulse and the voice of the people. Then after the evaluation, people came to us telling about their concerns – *“Gelo, we need this and that, let’s put VD Center in Google Map, let’s us develop a mobile app, let’s make a database, let’s do the VD Introduction Video...”*, and more!

This *going out* opened our eyes to see the needs of the people, therefore we took it one step at a time. With the help of a great team and adviser and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we developed the #PrayVD (Daily Word of God for all). We didn’t have any idea how to do it but we did it anyway. Step by step, Jesus is walking with us, we got better and better.

Take that first step!

After some period of time, the project started to spread not only throughout Manila, but also in Visayas and Mindanao.

Then we got news that it is being sent outside the Philippines like in Malaysia and United States. Woah! This reason and the hunger of people moves us to continue persevering. The project had been running for more than a year now and it continues to bless many souls. To God be the glory!

After that, we got to see more demands and necessity to bring these Word of God to many, especially to the young, using the latest technology available and according to the capacity that we have.

We launched the radio program called *“Young Man, Get Up!”*, the first in the Philippines, which was launched last 2017. The title was taken from the passage of Luke 7:11-17 where we see Jesus again moved with pity, bringing the young man back to life.

See, the more we go out, the more we realize the urgency of the mission and the more it becomes instinctive for us.

Go out and see that the world is bigger than you think.

Are we going out? Preaching, teaching and healing like Jesus? In what way is God calling us to do it now? (Not yesterday or tomorrow, but now!)

Compassion came from the Latin word *compati* which means *“suffer with”*. Are you ready to suffer with them?

Find your greatest possible effectiveness to bring life and love to many!

Friend, see and be moved by compassion.

25

HOW IS YOUR HEART?

"May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, may you be rooted and founded in love"

Ephesians 3:17

How is it?

Happy? Broken? Empty? Betrayed? Cold? Hard as stone?
Soft as *mamon* (Filipino sponge cake)?

Every time we look into our heart, we see our center, the essence of who we are and all the things we value.

In our heart we realize our desire, passion and drive. We know how we are if we know how our heart is.

How about the persons beside you, how are their hearts?

We cannot see the entirety of it, but we can see a part of it, in the way they act and speak. "For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of." (Luke 6:45) Only when we enter into one's heart that we can fully appreciate a person.

Which is why a song like *Exchange of Hearts* was composed, saying that,

"Girl you'd understand if your heart was mine, if we had an exchange of heart ... then you'd know how I

fell apart, you'd feel the pain when the memories start".

It's like saying, if we had an exchange of heart, you will understand who you are in my life, and how much I love you.

How about the heart of Jesus? How is it?

In John 19:34 it says, *"One of the soldiers, however, pierced his side with a lance and immediately there came out blood and water"*

That is the heart of Jesus: betrayed, broken and pierced. But this is also the heart of Jesus: free, whole and a stream of life and love.

Let us try to have an *exchange of heart* with Jesus and deepen on it.

Betrayed and Free.

Have you been betrayed by your friend? Or at least you felt betrayed? How does it feel?

It hurts, right? It hurts because you care for that person so much, yet they repay you with betrayal, and worst, they lifted you up so high before they brought you down.

Thanks be to God I haven't experienced so much betrayal in my life, but there is one girl I met who was betrayed so much. She trusted a friend, yet that person stole millions of pesos from her. It caused her a lot of depression and anxiety, to the point of having a cancer. She survived and is cancer-free now.

Jesus was betrayed, by Judas, and by us.

Why did it have to be a friend who chose to betray the Lord? Why did he use a kiss to show them? That's not what a kiss is for!

Only a friend can betray a friend, a stranger has nothing to gain. Only a friend who comes close enough, can ever cause so much pain. ("Why" by Michal Card)

Betrayed heart.

Free heart.

Jesus, way ahead, knows that Judas will betray Him, He knew what will happen to him, He knew how it will happen, yet He chose to stay.

"No one takes away my life from me, I lay it down on my own." (John 10:18)

This is the heart of Jesus, free to choose love and free to do the will of God. Betrayed and free.

Broken and whole

Have you been broken-hearted? I was. At some degree, we all were. How does it feel?

I know how it feels, it feels like every word in the lyrics of a broken-hearted song speaking to your heart.

There's a song called *Leave your Lover* by *Sam Smith*, with lyrics that hurt me when I was in my broken-hearted stage, looking outside my window, while raining,

"you'll never know the endless nights, the rhyming of the rain or how it feels to fall behind and watch you call his name".

Ouuuuch! Really hurts!

But, how about us when we break someone's heart?

We all, in some sense, are heartbreakers too. We broke so many hearts in an intentional and unintentional way, especially the heart of Jesus.

Jesus was broken – He chose us, but we chose ourselves, like a rose, trampled on the ground. He carried his cross, took the fall and thought of us, above all.

Yes, it is broken by us, yet it is still whole.

His heart is whole because it's full of you, me, and all of us.

Amidst brokenness, He is filled with love.

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34)

Pierced and a stream of life and love

Have you been pierced? At least figuratively?

For me, these are the times when someone crushed my ego, made me angry, or pissed me off. When I am pierced, I

pierce back, I give death. It is when I say bad words and offend someone. It is when I cut relationship and create division.

But Jesus did exactly the opposite.

When Jesus was pierced, instead of piercing back, immediately He poured out His life and love for us, through his blood and water.

Water represents life.

He gave us new life through the baptism of water.

"Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again ... Born of water and Spirit" (John 3:3,6)

We are born again through Him. He gives new life. We are piercing Him, yet He is giving us renewal.

Blood represents love.

"For God so love the world that He gave His only begotten one and only Son that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

A new covenant was established through Jesus' blood. A new relationship with God through Christ. When He poured out His blood, He built a new bridge that we can walk on, the way to God the Father.

If we are hundred steps away from God, Jesus is pouring out His blood and taking that ninety-nine steps to us, asking us to take that one step back to Him, by receiving His blood.

Friend, this is the heart of Jesus, this is indeed the *sacred* Heart of Jesus.

"May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, may you be rooted and founded in love." (Eph 3:17)

Contemplate and reflect the heart of Jesus.

"May you be able to understand with all the believers the width and length and height and depth in a word." (Eph 3:18)

How is your heart?

If we are called to be Christ, then we are called to have the heart of Christ, living in us – betrayed yet free, broken yet whole, pierced yet a stream of life and love.

Friend, continue *"to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." (Eph 3:19)*

26

FREEDOM

"The truth will set you free"

John 8:32

The Bible is a book of love. You will see the word *love* a lot of times, but you will also see a lot of *obey*. How come?

When we think of love, we think of heaven and of freedom, and when we think of freedom, we think that it's opposite with obedience, but Jesus shows to us that they are interrelated and inseparable, like the back and front of a coin.

"I love you just as the Father loves me; remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love." (John 15:10-11)

Maybe we're thinking, *"But Jesus, I don't want to obey, it feels imprisoning to obey someone."*

Yes, it does if the person you're obeying is not doing the will of God.

If someone is commanding you to jump from a bridge, steal from a bank, or kill someone, do you feel that you are loving? Do you think you're even helping the person you obey? In

these cases, if you obey, then you're exactly doing the opposite; you're helping them not to love, therefore you are not loving! You become slave!

But if someone is commanding you to do good things for your sake, such as being connected with God, taking care of yourself, avoiding wrong paths, detaching from unnecessary things, being compassionate, respecting each person's dignity, and giving more, and you obey it, then indeed you are loving! You become truly free!

Loving is obeying and obeying is loving, depending on the commandments.

This is what Jesus tells us, *"This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this, to give one's life for his friends, and you are my friends if you do what I command you."* (John 15:12-15)

By obeying Jesus, we are loving one another as He has loved us.

By loving one another as He has loved us, we are obeying Jesus.

27

WHAT IF YOUR BLESSINGS COME THROUGH RAIN DROPS

"For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but
whoever loses his life for my sake will find it"

Matthew 16:25

There is a song by Laura Story that goes,

*"What if Your healing comes through tears? What if
a thousand sleepless nights are what it takes to know
You're near? What if trials of this life are Your mercies
in disguise?"*

Many people say that we just need to relax in life, get all the comfort we can and live a *hayahay* (comfortable) life. We start forgetting the importance of trials and sacrifice. Nothing worthwhile can be gained without a suffering.

One can never have a good body with strong muscles without accepting the pain of working out. One can never be a scholar without the trials of academic life. One can never be spiritual without a self-control and a sacrifice of his own will.

Are we losing the essence of the cross?

Jesus on the cross is the way of life. We cannot fully live without a cross and we cannot carry a cross without Jesus.

Many would like to be in the Kingdom of God, but few are willing to pay the price. Many love Jesus as long as they are without trials. We just want a happy life without the cross in the picture. If so, then we're not following Christ, we're following Superman! Go and watch a movie!

If we want full life by full love, then we need to give a full sacrifice.

Full love is willing the good of the others, not the other way around.

Love is not about liking, it's about willing.

You might have liked someone the first time you met them, but time will pass that you will learn and experience their shortcomings and weaknesses (that sometimes they have a bad breath). There are moments they will do you wrong, even unconsciously, it is inevitable, for no two persons are perfectly compatible.

In those cases, are you willing to forgive and to still love the unlikeable? It's hard right?

Love can never be attained without a sacrifice of one's own interest and cannot be achieved by man alone, therefore in our cross, we need Jesus.

With His help we can do good for others, despite of our human limitation. If we do so, we realize that we like others, after all.

"For sin is not to have any power over you, since you are now under the law but under grace," (Romans 6:14) every time you choose to love.

Together, let us pick up our cross.

28

DO GOOD ANYWAY

"The advocate, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name – he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you"

John 14:26

Have you experienced being rejected by the person you're trying to help? Shameful, right? Then the next time you can help, you will just choose not to.

Nobody wants to be rejected, it feels like your whole identity is being degraded. But being afraid of rejection can hold us to do good things.

As Einstein said,

"The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything."

Being afraid of rejection is only one of the many factors that paralyzes us to do good things.

Another common reason is being afraid of what will other think of us.

If we do bad things, people will judge us, but even if we do good things, people will still judge us. That's why we are now

living in a world where it's more comfortable not to do anything at all! This is not the Christian way, as Mother Teresa reminds us,

"If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway. The good you do today, will often be forgotten. Do good anyway."

Easier said than done, right?

Let us look to the One who exemplified it the most, Jesus.

He was honest and sincere, but still, they deceived him. He healed them, but still, they battered him. He saved them, but still, they condemned him. Despite all this, Jesus loved anyway.

"But Jesus is God, that's why He can do it."

I guess these words are now popping in your mind, right? But I tell you, this is just a nicer way of saying to yourself that "I cannot do it, let others do it."

Friend, you are right, we cannot do it . . . alone! This is why we need an ally, a help, an advocate – the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the most forgotten person in the Trinity, but in fact He is no less than Jesus and God the Father.

The Holy Spirit opens again our closed hearts. He's the one who moves us out from our comfort zone and away from our safe bounds, and the one who gives us courage and fidelity to do good anyway.

Friend, together, with the help of the Holy Spirit, let us be faithful again in doing good things, starting from the smallest thing we do – fixing our bed, washing the dishes, or greeting the person right next to us.

Faithful in small, faithful in big.

Come, Holy Spirit.

29

CHANGING THE WORLD

"We become what we receive."

St. Augustine of Hippo

Do you want to change the world? For better?

We all want to transform the world for better, that's for sure. Now, I wonder what's the best way to do it?

We have tried a lot of good things already, but in this track, we always end up tired, demotivated, and empty. How come? Maybe we're doing it in a wrong way. Let's analyze it.

Start by breathing in and breathing out.

Everything we breathe in, we breathe out; air is not something that primarily comes from us, we are not the source of it. Same as the fact that we do not produce food from our own stomach, we take it in and take it out. Same as goodness, we receive it and then we share it.

You see, nothing really starts from us – we are a transmitter, not a source. The good that we want to give will not originally come from us, but we can transmit it.

We can fall short, thinking that we can change the world inside out, as if we are the source of good. Moreover, when we change the world outside in, receiving all the self-

development and human formation needed but does not transmit it, like a flow of goodness that got stuck, we will just spoil it. The best way, I see, to transform the world, is both outside in and inside out.

Outside In

St Augustine said, *"We become what we eat."* Whatever we take in, we become – if we take in negativity all the time, we become negative; if we take in psychological problems most of the time, tendency is, without proper care and formation, we can have a psychological problem too; if we take in a lot of dirt, we can become dirty!

Let us take in what is good, so we can transmit what is good.

But where could be the best source? I say, the Church.

Maybe you're thinking now, "Come on! Church is not the perfect source of good." I agree with you, it's not perfect, and that is the reason why a Youtube video "Why I hate religion, but love Jesus" was composed (a half-baked story for me).

Many people do not like the Church or religion, it is composed of people with a lot of failures, it is corrupt, restrictive, exclusive, intimidating and out of reach. On the other hand, many people like Jesus alone, Christians or non-Christians.

Jesus is good, interesting, amazing, troubling, assertive, and radical, which is why almost everyone wants Him to be their

spiritual master. They make Jesus their only source, removing the Church in the picture.

But think about it, without the Church, we will not even learn who Jesus is. It is the Church, who faithfully perseveres to make Jesus known to all, and yet we don't want it?

Yes, it has a lot of failures because Jesus entrusted the Church to people He knew who are sinners. But think about it, what will happen if He insteads let the angels administer it? That would be creepier!

Jesus entrusted *her* to us, because he believes in our potential, that we can bring good through our brokenness. Without the Church, we will never know who Christ is. We can never live our spiritual life alone, it is the Church who nourishes us.

We need people who can transform us to be better outside in.

We increase our knowledge of God and receive our spiritual needs from the Church where Jesus gave Himself. *"Take and eat; this is my body."* (Matthew 26:26)

Jesus is giving His life through the Church, so we can eat it, spiritually and sacramentally. In receiving His own body and blood through the bread and wine, we become like Christ. To see things the way He sees it, to live like how He lives and love like how He loves. In being so, we can transform the world inside out, which brings us to the second point.

Inside Out

After receiving the food that Jesus gave, now it is Jesus who is asking for food.

"Have you anything to eat?' And they gave him a piece of broiled fish. He took it and ate it before Him." (Luke 24:41-43)

Or simply stating, Jesus is asking, "What do you have"?

Money? Material possessions? Influence? Talents? Problems? Sins? Brokenness? Happiness?

Basic human principle: we give what we have.

Like a flowing river, we flow various things in this world. What is it that you flow?

If you receive money, you become a person of money who gives money. If you receive problems, you become a person of problem who gives more problem in this world. If you receive inspirations, you become inspired person who gives inspiration to many. If you receive love, you become love that gives love. If you receive Jesus, you become like Jesus who brings Jesus to many.

Me? I want to give my whole life, the person that I am now and the person that I will be.

I want to pray more and be a prayerful person so that in me, others can learn how to pray.

I want to read more, so I can receive and write for others.

I want to listen more, so I can speak more to many. I want to receive Jesus, so I can be like Him and give Him to many.

Outside in, we take Jesus; inside out, we give Jesus.

Friend, take in what is life and love, then give it out.

Be a flowing river of goodness, because that, my friend, is the way we can best transform the world, to better together.

30

ADELANTE (FORWARD)!

"Get up and eat, or the journey will be too much for you"

1 Kings 19:7

Are you down and troubled? Distressed by the many problems surrounding you? Do you want to give up?

Whether you like it or not, we all pass through this stage and we will still do; therefore, we need to know where to get strength during these times.

There is one character in the Bible who we can look at, who best relates to this period in our life: Elijah.

The queen put a price on his head and people were searching to kill him. Scared, Elijah flew away in distress, sat down under a tree, and prayed to God for him to die. Imagine, he was totally worn out by all the responsibilities, threats, problems, confusion, and fear in his life. He wanted to end everything, including his life. He said, "Enough Lord! Take my life for I am no better than my ancestors" (1 Kings 19:1-8).

He cannot move forward anymore.

Tired, he fell asleep under a tree. Then the angel told him, *"Get up and eat."* He woke up and saw a cake and a jar of

water at his head. He ate and drank, but he didn't get up. He slept again. Imagine how tired and demotivated he was. Then the angel came for the second time, now saying, "*Get up and eat, for the journey is too long for you*".

This time, he received strength from the food and got up.

God is telling you the same thing today, "*Get up and eat for the journey is too long for you*". Eat not only physical food, but also the spiritual food He is providing you. He knows exactly what you need. Nourish yourself and be familiar with His spiritual food.

Nourish yourself.

There are foods that we don't like. I, for example, don't like broccoli, squash, and *ampalaya*. But these are healthy, and it could be the exact food I need.

God is nourishing you with His Words. Most of the time, it hurts, it cuts through our hearts, we don't like to hear any more of it, it touches so much our realities, that we ourselves are afraid to touch. But God knows that His Words are exactly what we need! We need to learn how to like it; it's not easy but it's good for us, so, eat and get up!

Be familiar.

If there are foods we don't like, there are also foods that we really like – which we call as our *comfort food*. Mine is *sinigang na baboy* (pork soup). What's yours?

Whenever we eat our *comfort food*, it takes us away from problems, it's as if we are transported to another realm of reality, it brings us back to the best time in our life, it gives nostalgia, we remember our most joyous day.

In eating the spiritual food of God, it's not only that we are nourished by it, it also makes us remember the giver of the food. This motivation places us back on the right track in life.

Friend, eat and get up! There's a long journey ahead of us.

Read the Word of God, join the School of the Word, attend the Sunday mass, receive the Eucharist (where Jesus is giving Himself to you), and move forward.

Adelante!

31

HIDDEN LIFE

"Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit."

John 12:24

In every man's life, there comes a point that we need to be away from others to be closely beside God, in the small, ordinary details of life. Even Jesus did this, to be like a seed, planted beneath the ground.

I wonder what Jesus did when He was twenty-three years old?

Reading, writing, or carpentering? I don't know.

There was no account in the life of Jesus for his first thirty years of living, except one, when he was left behind the temple.

In that account, it says that the teachers were amazed at His understanding, and He was only twelve years old then. Imagine that!

If he's already that wise, how come He didn't immediately start His ministry and preaching?

There must be something in that thirty years of hidden life that made Jesus, Jesus; that made His three years' ministry as efficient as it is, lasting for a lifetime. Like a tree, before it sprouts, it builds its root deep down the ground where no one can see.

The external things we see from others are only the fruits of the things they did when no one sees them.

People might be clapping at how great someone sings, writes or cooks, but behind every success, a lot of work was done.

A great singer must have practice hard, daily, in a karaoke or even in a swimming pool.

A book can be good, but behind it must be years of experience, pain, and joy.

A "*pinakbet*" can be delicious, but behind it is a process of cooking, buying, transporting, selecting, harvesting, growing, and planting of the vegetables.

What the people see are just the tip of the iceberg. Below every great work is a bigger iceberg of dying inside, with hard work, patience, perseverance and so on.

There's a time for waiting, processing, hoping, and I believe.

Friend, when it seems like no one appreciates what we do in secret, keep being faithful with it. Keep loving on the side, at the backstage, and inside your room. I will do mine.

Our small yeses are the foundation for the big yeses in life.

32

THERE'S A TIME FOR HOPING

"Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer"

Romans 12:12

What is it that you greatly hope for?

Achievement of your dreams? Reconciliation with a friend?
Seeing your love again?

We all hope for something – to graduate in school, to receive bonus at work, to see again our parents, and more. We never stop hoping, for it is what makes us move forward.

There is a quote about happiness by the philosopher Immanuel Kant saying,

"Rules for happiness: something to do, someone to love, something to hope for."

Our happiness is greatly influenced by what we hope for. If we hope for small things, we can receive small and temporal happiness, but if we hope for big things, we can receive great happiness.

What is it that you hope for?

Mama Mary sets the best example of hoping. She hoped for God to do great things, to help Israel and remember his

promise of mercy. Despite being a lowly servant, she highly hoped for the salvation of many.

Indeed, God looked at her with favor and did great things. In result, Mary's spirit rejoiced in God, she became the mother of our Lord, the savior of all.

Mama Mary also shows us the attitudes we need in hoping, namely, faith and love.

Faith, by fully trusting and relying on God, regardless of the immediate outcome. Love, by humility, always seeking the good of the other, hoping for things not only for ourselves but mostly for others.

Put our hope in God and rejoice in Him despite of what others say to us. These days we hear voices telling us not to expect or put our hopes up for us to avoid disappointment in the end. This could be the Buddhist way of living, but not as Christians, for we are people full of hope!

"Have hope and be cheerful, be patient in trials and pray constantly." (Romans 12:12)

Friend, like Mama Mary, the woman who waited nine months for the birth of Jesus, thirty years for His time to start His public ministry, and three days of sorrow before His resurrection, may we put our hope in God, with faith and love, that He will do great things for us.

Mama Mary, teach us to be hopeful.

33

WHAT IS LOVE?

"The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep"

John 10:11

Jesus compared His love with a *good shepherd*.

I find it hard to picture how intimate is the love of a shepherd to his sheep. I haven't seen a sheep in my life. I tried to see my love for our dog, *Matchie*, but when I read Jesus' words "I will lay down my life for the sheep," I cannot see the point of dying for my dog. He even bit me once. It's hard to picture it out in that sense, so instead I tried to picture a person whom I am willing to lay down my life for.

It is in loving someone so much that we start to understand the love of God in us. Let us see, let's get personal.

I fell in love with someone.

She was my officemate. Before, I always make sure to take a glimpse at her every time I visit their floor. There were also times when I made excuses to my supervisor just to see her. There was something inside me that pushes me to go and to talk with her.

After many days of doing my secret *sulyap* (glimpse), I had the courage to step on to the next level, I chatted with her. It was a success!

After our virtual communication, I felt that it's not enough. I needed to be closer to her. So, I asked her out. Again, success!

After that, still something inside me was pushing me to be closer to her, it was as if friendship is not enough. So, I started to send her letters to express my feelings.

In that moment, I understood that love cannot bear distance.

Love desires closeness.

This is how God the Father loves us. He sent His love letter through His prophets, then He himself went down through Jesus Christ, so we can see Him, hear Him, and touch Him. Then He went inside of us through the Holy Spirit, so He can be the closest person in us, closer than we are to ourselves.

Love cannot bear distance, it desires closeness.

As I became closer with her, I get to know her more. I learned more of how beautiful she is inside out. But of course, as human, we all have our shadows, she had hers.

There came a time when I went crazy decrypting the code and signals she implicitly wanted to communicate to me. It's as if she was telling me to read between the lines of her actions and words. It was challenging. Not that I'm

generalizing either men or women, but, we guys are simple. If we say yes, it means yes, if we say no it means no; and I'm a programmer, I'm just a simple *"if-else-then"*. Her complexity was so deep that I wanted to ask her directly why she was so up and down. I required an explanation.

But through the wisdom of my friend, I didn't. He told me not to ask for an explanation from a woman, because sometimes they don't understand themselves too!

Indeed, he was right. Take it from a married man.

Love is patient and understanding.

Jesus knows our ups and downs, He knows how stubborn and confused we are. He loves us anyway.

He knows how crazy and lost we are. He loves us anyway.

He is willing to leave the ninety-nine sheep just to find us and bring us back to His arms.

Jesus loves us as how St. Paul described it,

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

To be honest with you, I'm quite a prideful person, you know; that's my number one sin. I always wanted to lead and

be heard. I wanted to be acknowledged and be seen by many the way I wanted them to see me. But the moment I learned to love truly was the moment I laid down my pride and allow myself to be led more than leading, to listen more than being listened to, to acknowledge more than being acknowledged, to forgive than to be forgiven, to see more than being seen.

Love breaks pride and all the rest of the sins. Love overcomes everything.

Jesus loved us so much that He overcame even death, just for us to realize it. He died in order for us to live.

The love that I felt for her was a living testimony of God's love today. You too, I know you have experienced how to love someone.

Imagine that person you love so much, your desire to be with them, your sacrifice for them, and your conversion because of them.

Now, try to imagine each person that you know, with different characteristics, needs, and ways they wanted to be loved. Can you love them all?

The human love we experience here in this world is just a fraction of God's greater love to each one of us.

Beloved. This is how Jesus is calling me, you, and all of us.

"You are my beloved."

We can ask Him, *"Do you love me that much Lord?"*

He will surely say, "Yes."

"No one takes away my life from me, but I lay it down myself so that you may find yours in me."

Beloved.

Jesus is love.

34

WHY AM I A MISSIONARY?

"No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

John 15:13

This is a story of how I found the love of God in my life.

It was an encounter with the Good Shepherd.

I knew my life will never be enough to pay back Jesus' love, but I asked Him, *"Lord, how? Tell me, how can I love you back?"*

He answered, *"As I have loved you, so you must love one another."* (John 13:34)

Love as I have loved and live as I have lived.

Am I loving the way Jesus loves? Am I living the way Jesus lives?

"Gelo, I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold, these also I must lead. They will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd. Bring them back to their shepherd, bring them home"

This is the message I received from God when He called me.

I remember having a deep desire to transform the world.

We all have.

I realized afterward that that desire to transform the world is not only from our altruistic capacity but born from the authenticity of our faith, our prayer.

I wanted to make a big impact. I reflected about my work as an IT Business Analyst.

I was blessed. I had a good job in a good place. I worked for about four years as a professional. I had all the things that my parents wanted for me – job security, savings, insurance, and investments. I had a good salary, I earned more than what my mother, father, sister, and brother earn, combined. I had the opportunity to travel to different places. I was living a good life.

I was not someone totally ignorant about God. I was a lay missionary in our community. I was aware that my first mission was my family, friends and work. God placed me where I was to do His will – to love my co-workers (although it's not that easy most of the time) and do my work for the purpose and glory of God (though sometimes just for the purpose of earning money).

Still, there was something within me that invited me to move to another place. It was to teach, write a book, contribute to society, and build a business. I discerned it for months and decided to push on with it. My savings were ready and I had my plan to enroll in UP Diliman for Masters in Sociology, hoping that I may pursue doctoral in the future.

Part of my project of life too was to use this knowledge to build a business for the good of many, together with my closest friends, our “Brighter Future” company. I was fully decided with it, let’s get it on! But before that, to double check my desires, I went for a second opinion, I asked a missionary to help me finalize my discernment. That missionary was a doctor and a former surgeon, now, a priest.

We went to grab some coffee in Robinson Manila. He taught me the basics of discernment. I guess the Holy Spirit talked through Him; I cannot remember it completely word by word, but we had this kind of conversation where he asked me questions to dig down the root of all I desire to change.

“Gelo, what do you think is the cause of the social problem in the world? Let us say in the hospital system?” he asked.

“The main problem I see is the lack of medicines and materials,” I said.

“Why do we have a lack of medicines?” He continued.

“Probably because of lack of budget by the government,” I replied.

“Why do we have a lack of budget?” He asked.

“Maybe because some of the budget are placed into, let’s say, wrong hands.”

“Why are they placed in the wrong hands?” He asked.

“Because people are greedy?” I doubtingly answered.

"Why are they greedy?" he asked.

"Because they get power, honor and pleasure from the money they get," I replied.

"Why do they want it?" He asked for the last time.

"Because they desire love," I realized.

We seek for love and we find a piece of it from the material things we get and honor we receive from others.

We go and go and go for it, to the point of disregarding the consequences of the selfish decisions we made as we pursue our own desires.

It was very clear to me in that moment that the root-cause of our social problem is the emptiness and never-ending desires in our hearts.

The social problem and unjust structure we have are only the accumulation of many personal sins and many searches for love in wrong places.

Yes, I found it, that is what I wanted to heal.

As Christian, we believe that Christ died for us for this very reason – that we may find life and love in Him and not from other things.

The transformation of the world starts from the transformation of our hearts.

I ended my discernment session with that priest. Instead of finding an answer, I found more questions. I asked myself, *"What is really the call of God in my life?"*

I prayed about it for the next few months and in one of my dialogue with Jesus, He asked me.

"Gelo, do you want to change the society?"

"Yes, Lord," I said

"Gelo, do you want to feed the hungry and fill up the emptiness of the people?"

"Yes, Lord," I affirmed.

"Gelo, do you want to heal broken relationships and give meaning back to each person's life?"

"Yes Lord," I answered for the third time.

"Gelo, bring them home. Bring them back to their good shepherd. Bring me home in them. They are my beloved, bring them back to their lover."

"Yes, Lord, yes Lord, yes Lord," I whispered.

Tears dropped from my eyes.

I understood that He was calling me to dream bigger than my dreams, to go beyond my own plans and go to His bigger plans.

Love as I have love and live as I have lived.

"Gelo, lay down your life as I lay it down for my sheep."

Yes.

Now, I am here not because I decided to transform the world out of my own will, but because I wanted to respond to the will of God – to love you.

How about you?

In what way is God calling you to love His sheep? His people?

God has a bigger plan for each one of us and when He calls us, though we know not where He leads, follow Him.

Follow the voice that we knew within. Follow the good shepherd.

Friend, if you received the love of God when you read this book, then He is calling you now to be His missionary, the Good Shepherd for the world of today.

Bring His people back home.

Share His love to many.

Start your mission, today, by sharing the love you received.

Amen.

Soli Deo gloria

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Gelo Balsita, 23 years old, a young Lay Missionary travelling throughout the world sharing the love and life we can find from God, as commissioned by Jesus,

"Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15)

Before fully dedicating his life for the mission, he was an IT

Systems Analyst who worked for more than three years in the number one mobile service provider in the country, SMART Communications Inc. He then moved as a Business Analyst in an IT-service-provider company for top airlines, CHAMP Cargosystems PH. He handled accounts such as Japan, Cathay Pacific, Singapore, U.S. and European airlines.

As a missionary, he had been in Manila, Quezon, Tagaytay, Pangasinan, Cebu, Cagayan De Oro, Bukidnon and in other countries as well.

He is the co-creator of #PrayVD (Daily Word of God) and was the host of the international online radio program "Young man, get up!".

Please pray for him as he continues his vocation.

Any support for his studies and daily expenses will be greatly welcome. Please contact *Fraternidad Missionera Verbum Dei* for more details in donating.

SINGLE AND HAPPY?

Yes or no, this book is for you!

I am happy not because I am single, it just happened that I am both single and happy at the same time. To add to that, I am also poor and low-profile.

But still, how come I can say that I'm happy?

I am happy because I found a *love life* today. Yes, today!

This book is all about that. A collection of reflections in finding your *love life* every day.

My suggestion? Read one chapter of this per day and you will see, regardless of your status – single, in a relationship, married, complicated or confused, for sure you can find your *love life* too, one day at a time.

I pray that as you read this book, you may find a *life* to its fullness and a *love* that is eternal. The *love life* that you deserve and the *love life* that God wants for you.

With a smile,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ABPakita' or similar, with a stylized flourish.

Gelo